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ABSTRACT

This newsletter focuses on what works in inclusive education. A major article is "Inclusive Education: Needs of Minnesota Families--Major Findings from a 'Together We're Better' Study." This article presents findings of a statewide survey of families of children with disabilities. Findings are categorized within four areas: (1) educational placement; (2) parent satisfaction; (3) inclusion of students in general education; and (4) parent support teams. Other articles include: "Inclusive Education: Nathan's Story" (Jean Trainor); "Inclusive Communities Support Effective Conflict Resolution" (Jo Montie and Terri Vandercook); "A Problem Solving Process" (Gary Hoganson and Laura Medwetz); "Together We're Better: Resources for Inclusive School Communities" (Laura Medwetz and Mary McDevitt); "What Makes Educators Effective Facilitators of Inclusion?" (Jennifer York and others); "Why Educators Support Self-Determination for Students with Disabilities"; and "The Perfect Pumpkin: A True Story" (Chuck Palmer). Columns present ideas for classroom practices, list resources for educators and families, and list events concerned with integration. (DB)

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Topics in Inclusive Education

What's Working

Fall 1994

ED 378 722

Inclusive Education: Nathan's Story

Hi! My name is Nathan Trainor, S.P. I'm ten years old. You may be wondering about the letters after my name. I did, too. My mom said I needed them before I could start school. They stand for severe/profound. I started at River Hills, a special school for kids with disabilities in Cedar Falls, Iowa, at age two. (Talk about pushy mothers!) But I love school! I liked River Hills, especially the popcorn machine in the office, and there were nice people there.

When I was six, my mom heard that River Hills might be closing. We didn't know where I would go to school if River Hills closed so we checked around. We found Hansen Elementary School in Cedar Falls. I enrolled in Kindergarten at Hansen. I was included in the Kindergarten class with all the other kids. It was great! I loved Hansen! I went there for first grade, too.

In 1992, I transferred to West Cedar Elementary School in Waverly. (My mom has a hard time making up her mind.) No, really – West Cedar is my neighborhood school. I like going to school in Waverly. I like riding the bus but the ride to Cedar Falls was really long.

It took some planning for me to come to West Cedar. I'm in the regular class here, too. West Cedar didn't have kids like me in the regular classroom until me. My mom and my integration facilitator and associate from Hansen met with Dr. Book, the Superintendent of Waverly-Shell Rock School District in July of 1991 to discuss an inclusion program for me in Waverly for the fall of 1992. After Dr. Book had time to review some information we provided him and he met with Roger Wilcox, my principal, they said they didn't know why it wouldn't work!

Everyone has been great! My teachers and my associates are wonderful! My mom says Waverly-Shell Rock and AEA 7 have collaborated to make this program a success. (I'm not sure what that means but I know everyone has been working together.)

I've made a lot of friends here. My guidance counselor, Ms. J., helped by teaching my classmates about disabilities and about the circle of friends. I'd like to tell you about some of my friends.

Lynelle is one of my very best friends! She calls me on the phone, we go to movies and to the Dairy Queen! The first time Lynelle called on the phone my mom didn't know what to do because I don't talk yet. (Sometimes her brain leaks out.) After a minute, she figured out that I could still listen so she put the phone to my ear. I smiled. I like getting phone calls! Lynelle writes me notes on her computer and she even made me a tape of her singing and playing the piano. It was great!

Seth's my best friend – that's a guy. He lives at this neat place where they have lots of animals. I got to ride his horse and he has a cool go-cart that I got to ride, too! We go to the movies. We went to see "Free Willy". At the end when Willy escaped I was so excited I put my hand on Seth's arm. He knew I was saying, "Wasn't that cool!" He said, "Yeah Nathan, that was cool!" It's nice to have a friend that understands you even when you don't talk.

I've known Emily since I was a baby and now she's in my class at school. We went skiing in Colorado this spring. It was awesome! It was kind of funny, though. Emily's mom was worried about the special things they would have to do for me on the trip. Emily said, "I can't believe you're worried, Mom. Nathan's just like us." I've learned a lot from Emily, but I think she's learned some things from me, too.

School isn't just about friends, though. I have to work, too! Mrs. O'Brien is helping me to learn how to walk in my walker. I work on the computer, too. We're also working on communicating. Frankly, I think talking's overrated. After all, I pretty much get what I want by reaching and as my mom says, "being vocal." Besides, maybe I'm an introvert!

As you can see my life has been a series of transitions. The next transition will be to another building for fifth grade. Are all the transitions worth it? I think so. The benefits as I see them are: I've made a lot of friends. I'm more responsive and aware of the world around me. I'm learning – to walk, to communicate, to be patient... And my friends know a kid with disabilities.

Contributed by Jean Trainor, Nathan's mom.

Published by the Together We're Better Program, a cooperative program of the Institute on Community Integration (UAP), in the University of Minnesota's College of Education, and the Minnesota Department of Education.

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Inclusive Education: Needs of Minnesota Families

Major Findings from a Together We're Better Study

What do Minnesota families of K–12 students with disabilities have to say about their experiences with schools? What are the families' needs when it comes to supporting the membership, active participation, and learning of their child within general education? In 1993, the Together We're Better program conducted a survey of Minnesota parents to find the answers to these questions.

Families are experts when it comes to the needs of their children and the family unit. Therefore, if we want to understand and meet the educational needs of children with disabilities and their families, we need to ask them about their experiences and needs, listen to what they say, and then act upon the information. With that goal in mind, in the fall of 1993 Together We're Better distributed 6,500 surveys to Minnesota families through parent organizations, school districts, community service organizations, and others. Of the 6,500 surveys distributed, 25% (1,630) were completed and returned. To encourage respondents to answer questions frankly and honestly, all responses were anonymous.

Nearly half of the respondents lived in the Twin Cities area, close to the percentage of students who live in the metropolitan area and receive special education services. The sample contained parents of students with each of the disability labels used in Minnesota, and the proportions with each label within the sample were relatively close to the proportions statewide. However, one way in which the study sample differed from the state population was that many parents were from school districts that had demonstrated leadership and progress in the development of inclusive school communities, had received training on inclusion-related advocacy, or had been involved with parent groups supporting inclusion. As a result of these supports, the rate of inclusion for children in this study may be higher than would be typical across the state.

This article condenses the results into a summary of major findings categorized within four areas: Educational Placement, Parent Satisfaction, Inclusion of Students in General Education, and Parent Support. Parents, advocates, educators, and persons with disabilities all played a role in the development of the survey.

Educational Placement

Where are students with disabilities being educated?

Projecting from this survey, of all the children receiving special education in Minnesota, probably:

- Less than 25% are being served solely in general education classrooms.
- More than 50% are being served in a combination of special and general education.
- At least 20% are totally segregated in special education environments.

Parents of children in mixed environments are least satisfied with their child's progress, yet this is how most children received services.

Where do parents want their children to be educated?

- Ninety-four percent want their child to spend at least some time in a general education setting.
- The majority want their child to spend most of their time in a general education setting.
- One third want their child to spend most of their time in a special education setting.

Please note that parents whose children spend more time in general education feel stronger about having their child included in general education.

What influences whether a student spends most of his or her time in general education settings?

- *Parent preference:* If parents want their children in general education, they tend to be educated there.
- *Severity of a child's disability:* The more severe the disability, the less likely the child will be educated in general education.
- *Age:* Children tend to spend more time in general education during the elementary years and much less time in general education at the preschool, middle school, or high school levels.

Parent Satisfaction

What needs to happen to ensure parent satisfaction with their individual educational planning process (IEP)/individual family service plan (IFSP) experience and with their child's progress?

According to parents, school staff must:

- Believe that my child can learn and be optimistic in setting goals.
- Respect and value my input and feelings.
- Don't forget to develop social and behavioral goals.
- Help all children value and treat one another well.
- Train all staff to understand the content and goals of the individual educational planning process (IEP).

What parents tend to be least satisfied with their child's progress?

- Parents with a high school-aged child.
- Parents whose child has a severe disability.
- Parents whose child has an emotional/behavioral disability.
- Parents of color.
- Parents with low incomes.
- Parents who are single.

Please note that parents of color and families with low incomes are not only less satisfied with their child's progress, but also receive less information and support, and their children are disproportionately placed in special education, particularly in the category of emotional/behavioral disabilities. Additionally, when parents of color have the support of an advocate, their positive experience with the IEP process, overall satisfaction, agreement that their child benefits from being in general education, and desire to have their child in general education increases to 100% on all measures for most ethnic groups. The support of an advocate has a similar effect with low income families.

Inclusion of Students in General Education

What worries parents about having their child educated in general education settings?

- Will my child get the support they need?
- Will they receive good instruction?
- Will other children accept my child?
- Will general educators accept my child?
- Will my child learn?

What did parents identify as barriers to successful school inclusion?

- Lack of money in schools.
- Large class sizes.
- Lack of skill by general educators in working with students with disabilities or dealing with behavioral issues.
- Other students' attitudes toward students with disabilities.
- Members of a child's team not working well together.
- Attitudes of general educators toward students with disabilities.
- Rigid or narrowly defined instructional goals in general education.
- Rigid or narrowly defined instructional goals for their child.
- Teaching methods used in general education.
- Grading practices were identified as a barrier at the secondary level.
- African American, Asian, and Latino parents felt that cultural or racial insensitivity was a barrier to inclusion.

The findings show that parent concerns decrease when students spend more time in general education. For example, parents whose children spend most of their time in general education are 20% less concerned about this than parents whose children are in special education full-time.

Having perceived these barriers, do parents still believe their child benefits from being in general education settings?

- The majority (ranging from 70–100% satisfaction) say *yes,* leading to the conclusion that the benefits are important and durable, despite the significant barriers.

What were experiences or factors that were key to a child benefiting from being in general education?

Notice that this list summarizes many of the factors discussed earlier related to parent satisfaction with the IEP/IFSP process and their child's progress in school, as well as the inverse of the barriers listed above:

- A classroom teacher who is supportive and flexible in meeting a child's needs.
- Staff respecting and valuing parent's input and feelings.
- Staff believing a child can learn and being optimistic in setting goals.
- General educators skilled in working with children with disabilities.
- Flexible or appropriate instructional goals in the general education classroom.
- Having a child's team be aware of the content of his or her individual education plan (IEP).
- Paying attention to setting social and behavioral goals.
- Helping all children to value and treat one another well.
- Supporting participation in class activities.

Parent Support

What kind of support do parents say they need?

- The support of school staff.
- Training (on how to support their child, their rights, their child's rights, and on how to communicate with staff).
- More opportunities to meet with school staff about their child's education.
- Written information about how to handle their child's behavior.

(***Needs*** *– continued on page 15*)

Inclusive Communities Support Effective Conflict Resolution

There are many people who feel a deep commitment to creating inclusive school communities that support the membership, active and valued participation, and learning of each child and adult within the school community. Realizing this vision can be very hard work, often times involving significant conflict.

The words *community, conflict,* and *inclusion* would most likely be seen on a list of frequently used words in the current school improvement literature. Although some view these as simply buzz words reflecting fads which aren't here to stay – "just another initiative" – we believe the meaning behind these words is substantial and the ideas are here to stay. So, what is this thing called community? Does the adjective *inclusive* add anything to the meaning of community or is it redundant? What is the relationship between conflict and community?

What Is Community?

Some refer to any group of people in close physical proximity as a community. However, living together in the same apartment building does not necessarily mean that a sense of community exists. A place where people live or go to school can be a community, but it doesn't necessarily become one. So, what makes a group a true community of people?

Defining community is somewhat like defining friendship; it's easy to experience and feel yet difficult to truly capture the concept. Sheldon Berman (1990) offers the following definition: *A community is a group of people who acknowledge their common purpose, respect their differences, share in group decision-making as well as in responsibility for the actions of the group, and support each other's growth.* Drawing from Berman's definition, there are a number of basic elements in an effective community. The people comprising a community:

- **Acknowledge their connection and commonalities.** In a community there is recognition of individuals' relatedness and interdependence with one another. A sense of community includes a sense of "we" and a feeling of cooperation brought to life by the expressions "we sink or swim together," "together we're better" and "it takes everyone in the village to educate a child".
- **Experience belonging.** Belonging is not "earned" but rather unconditionally given to anyone who wants to commit to being a part of that community. A sense of belonging is just as important as the tasks the community accomplishes.
- **Respect differences.** Differences are valued and viewed as strengthening the community. Healthy communities strive to build upon people's differences instead of hiding or down-playing them.
- **Develop relationships.** Members have personal connections and get to know one another as *people*. The heart of community is relationships! A sense of community cannot exist without people interacting and experiencing each other on a personal level. Take away the personal contact, and you don't have community but just a group of people swimming laps together in a pool – physically close but not connecting any more deeply.
- **Share responsibility for decision-making.** Communities have norms and procedures for making decisions, handling conflict, etc., whether implicitly or explicitly stated. There are shared responsibilities helping children and adults grow in a community, for decision-making, as well as for taking action and living with the process and outcomes of decisions.
- **Have a common purpose or shared vision.** All these elements are necessary, but not sufficient, if the goal is to have a healthy, effective community that sustains and stays "alive" over time. With a shared vision, members perceive a common reason for being together, which strengthens a sense of "we" and commitment to the relationships and decisions within a community. With a shared vision may come increased group ownership for both celebrations and crises. The group acknowledges and celebrates individual and collective contributions and accomplishments. The group also works together to solve issues and concerns that confront the community.

In reviewing the characteristics of an effective community, it appears that communities as we have defined them are inclusive. The concept of an *inclusive* school community has placed a large emphasis on the element of belonging – in the sense that children whose needs are different in any way (e.g., different abilities, ethnic backgrounds, or socio-economic status) should be supported as a valued member, active participant, and learner in typical school environments or activities versus being served separately. In keeping with some of the other elements of community, people's differences are respected and valued for the potential contributions to the entire community – contributions that would not be realized or simply go unnoticed if students whose needs are different and the people who support them (e.g., special educators, family members) were served as if two communities existed in the school. This type of service delivery would also have a negative impact on real-

izing the other elements of an effective community, that is: a) an acknowledgment of connections and commonalities; b) the development of relationships; c) shared decision making; and d) a common purpose or goal.

Connections Between Community and Conflict

A conflict is a disagreement; there are a variety of responses that an individual or group chooses once a conflict occurs. An effective community certainly influences how conflict is viewed and handled. This can be true of conflicts within an individual, with another person, as well as within and between groups. The following section identifies specific ways that an effective (inclusive) community impacts conflict and leads to the resolution of challenging issues.

- **Trust** is more likely to develop within a safe, supportive community. Trust leads to risk-taking in conflicts. So, efforts to build trust between and within groups (between adults and children, students and students, classroom teachers and specialists) will potentially have a positive impact on the community's ability to effectively resolve conflict. For example, because Ms. Tammin felt trust and safety with her colleagues she was able to share her concerns at a staff meeting presentation about new support strategies being proposed for meeting children's needs without necessarily giving them a special education label or conducting formal assessments. Trust allowed her to risk disagreement about an issue and that led to more in-depth discussion, understanding, and commitment to trying the proposed approaches, not to mention the "buy-in" and support of the entire faculty, not just the group who developed the initial proposal.
- **Acceptance and belonging** within a community means a person experiences belonging even when in conflict with other members of the community. Acceptance does not need to be earned based upon the outcomes of a conflict: in an inclusive community there is unconditional acceptance which may help individuals to be more contributing in resolving conflict. For example, during a class meeting, Janet was able to listen to the other side of the story and eventually take some ownership for teasing Raphael. Janet was able to keep her ears open (versus becoming defensive) partially because she felt acceptance and a sense of belonging in her classroom.
- **Strong, valuing relationships** that exist in a caring community may often be helpful in resolving conflict. There may be increased commitment to helping to reach a satisfactory outcome for everyone (i.e., "win-win") and not just oneself (i.e., "I win – you lose") due to the importance placed upon maintaining valuing relationships. For example, the previous year, Mr. Stark and Mr. Sharmet spent most of their day teaching on their own. As Mr. Stark and Mr. Sharmet began to team teach together, they began to know one another as real human beings (versus "that new sixth grade teacher" or "that special ed guy") At first, when something happened that the other didn't like, it was ignored or avoided. As time went on and their relationship grew, they became more effective at disagreeing in the open, and often resolving the conflict in a mutually satisfying way. Knowing one another as individuals made perspective-taking easier, which in turn supported understanding all "sides" of an issue.
- **Communities built upon diversity** can create more opportunities for conflict since differences of opinion are more likely. Also, adding multiple perspectives, abilities, cultures, personalities, and ways to approach things can make the conflict more complex. However, what may have increased the likelihood for conflict also improves the community's ability to resolve and creatively solve the conflict: diversity! For example, as the Prairie Home School community became more culturally diverse, there were an increased number of "challenges" and questions from both families and children about the school's behavioral expectations and discipline policy. Some felt that some of the expectations were not responsive enough to varying family and cultural practices. A series of dialogue groups to try to widen the understanding of the issues occurred. Eventually, the students, staff, and families identified a new plan that better met the needs of all children. Much of the creativity generated was due to diversity. The more perspectives present, the richer and deeper the knowledge for developing creative solutions. In addition, a community norm that differences should be embraced – not simply tolerated – helped Prairie Home build upon people's differences.
- **A community's response to crisis** depends upon the strength of the community (as well as other variables such as the nature or frequency of conflicts). Conflict can pull an already fragile community completely apart. If it occurs in a situation where people are already disconnected, conflict can be the catalyst that pushes people totally away – or even at each other. People may "remove themselves" mentally, physically, or emotionally from the problems, having little commitment to resolving them. Another response may be to point fingers of blame or lash out. If there is little or no community, conflicts are likely to escalate. However, crisis can bring a community together. People's growth, commitment, and sense of membership can be strengthened when they "rally together" to address a crisis. For example, some of the members of the Pepe School Community were aware of the growing problem of violence occurring both in and out of school. Some teachers were fearful and distrustful due to student-teacher confrontations. Others in the community didn't talk about it, perhaps hoping that

(***Communities*** *– continued on page 15*)

A Problem Solving Process

Schools are continually faced with problems or issues that appear insurmountable. This dilemma can often freeze school communities – or, more specifically, people within the schools – into a state of hopelessness. Unfortunately this state of hopelessness often results in a perceived need to continue the "status quo". This not only discourages the need for change and improvement, but also establishes an atmosphere of pessimism and gloom.

The following process was designed to empower school communities to identify and tackle their problems effectively. This problem solving process (adapted from Johnson and Johnson, 1991) is simply a tool for analyzing the problem, identifying ideas or solutions, and then designing a plan to take action.

Step 1: ***Define the Problem***

As a group, discuss the characteristics of the problem. Identify aspects of the problem by describing how it currently impacts your school. Also, describe as a group the vision of your school when this issue is resolved. Facilitate equal contributions by each group member and discuss group member responses. Summarize the discussion in statement form. This statement should be used as a means to reach consensus in order to move onto the next step. Step 1 should take about ten minutes.

Step 2: ***Identify Strengths and Barriers***

List as a group strengths in the school community that act as helping forces towards reaching the desired future. Strengths can include any assets within the school that can contribute to successful movement toward the future vision outlined in Step 1. Then list the barriers in the school community that hinder the movement towards the desired future or vision. Examples may include lack of enthusiasm for change, of information, or effective staff/parent training opportunities. Step 2 should take about five minutes.

Step 3: ***Brainstorm Strategies***

Now comes the fun part. Before you begin Step 3, remind group members about the freedom involved in brainstorming. This is a time when all ideas are welcome (no matter how wild they may seem). Recording responses in front of the group is absolutely vital. This not only confirms that the response was communicated effectively, but recording responses also promotes associations and connections for generating new ideas from other group members. Remember, hold all evaluations! The time for evaluating ideas will come in the next step. Step 3 takes about fifteen minutes.

Step 4: ***Select Possible Strategies***

Evaluate the ideas formulated in Step 3 and identify possible strategies. Is the idea realistic? (Note: Be realistic, but don't be afraid to try something new and take risks. That's the way problems are solved.) Are there resources (i.e., personnel, budget) available to support the idea? Are there supports (review strengths listed in Step 2) available in the district or school which can act as a helping force for implementing the idea? Record your discussion. Step 4 will take about ten minutes.

Step 5: ***Identify Priorities***

Review the list of possible strategies. As a group, identify priorities to work on. The following criteria may be helpful for group prioritization:

- Is there a logical order for the strategies suggested?
- Is there a strategy that intensely impacts the problem?
- What will it take (i.e., resources, supports) to implement the strategy?

One method for prioritization would be for each group member to cast a "ballot" for his or her priority choices. The strategy with the most votes is the top priority while strategies that get fewer votes would naturally fall in line behind it (i.e., high priority to low priority). Step 5 will take about five minutes.

Step 6: ***Develop a Plan***

Now that you've worked through all the other stages, it's time to develop a plan for action. Delineate the activities necessary to achieve the priority strategy. Be specific in describing the activities. Identify specific activities, timelines, responsibilities, and evaluation strategies. Consider how your method of evaluation will demonstrate the effectiveness of the activity. Was the activity/strategy implemented correctly? Did you receive the desired outcome? Step 6 can take twenty to thirty minutes.

You *can* make a difference! Anytime we think the problem is "out there", that thought becomes the problem (Covey, 1989). Problems or issues can be resolved: this produces a better working environment for all. Share this problem solving process with your school community and begin a plan for change and improvement.

Contributed by Gary Hoganson, Faribault Junior High School, Faribault, MN, and Laura Medwetz, Institute on Community Integration.

Covey, S.R. (1989) *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Johnson, D.W., & Johnson, F.P. (1987) *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Together We're Better

Resources for Inclusive School Communities

The Together We're Better program is launching into its third year. This five-year systems change program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and is a collaborative program between the Institute on Community Integration (UAP) at the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Education. The vision of the program is to develop a single educational system that supports the membership, participation, and learning of all students. Together We're Better uses a systemic approach to change. In other words, the program recognizes the importance of involving and impacting all parts of the educational system in order to instill change.

Program activities include:

- **Partnerships with local school districts in Minnesota.** Currently, the Owatonna, Moorhead, Crookston, and Chaska school districts are working in partnership with the program to develop more inclusive school communities in the District Partner component of the program. Together, the program and District Partners are learning new and effective approaches for systemic change.
- **Studies of teacher and administrator competencies.** Results will be shared with the Minnesota Board of Teaching and other institutes of higher education (see "What Makes Educators Effective Facilitators of Inclusion" on pages 8–9).
- **Involvement of families in each component of the program.** Working with families and advocacy organizations in the state, family needs have been gathered and schools and organizations are working to take action with those identified needs (see "Inclusive Education: Needs of Minnesota Families" on pages 2–3).
- **Supports for new learning and development.** A variety of staff development activities are provided. Print materials on the development of inclusive school communities are also available (see "Resources" on page 14).
- **The development of networking and capacity building throughout the state.** The Inclusion Mentorship component of the program was developed to broaden support on a much larger scale to Minnesota schools and families. Its ten teams provide local and regional support. Regional support is available through Technical Assistance and Partners for Inclusion Network groups. See the contact lists below for more information on the support available through this program.

Together We're Better learns from and along with many schools, organizations, and families throughout the state. Together we work to will bring about an inclusive, positive, supportive educational system in Minnesota. Contact Laura Medwetz at 612/626-7225 or Mary McDevitt at 612/282-3736 for additional information.

Partners for Inclusion Network

Network groups provide an opportunity to exchange ideas, support one another, and share successes and visions of children learning together. All school community members, including parents, are welcome! FFI, call:

Albert Lea	Linda Johnson	507/377-5825
Cokato	Barb Lhotka	612/286-2129
Faribault	Gary Hoganson	507/334-1864
Metro – East	Phil Sievers	612/457-8391
Metro – West	Tom Koch	612/988-4200
Montevideo	Darlene Hamer	612/269-9243
Spring Valley	Peggy Willoughby	507/346-7358
St. Francis	Ray Churak	612/434-0471

Technical Assistance and Outreach

Inclusion Mentorship Program teams support schools and families in the development of inclusive school communities through assistance and outreach. Support may be provided through problem solving (on- or off-site), presentations, or written materials. FFI, call:

Albert Lea	Linda Johnson	507/377-5825
Alice Smith	Tom Koch	612/988-4200
Burnsville	Judy Gregg	612/895-7321
Cokato	Barb Lhotka	612/286-2129
Faribault	Gary Hoganson	507/334-1864
Inver Grove Heights	Nancy McGrew	612/457-7220
Montevideo	Darlene Hamer	612/269-9243
St. Cloud	Steve Howe-Veenstra	612/252-2231
Spring Valley	Rita Wiersma	507/281-5225
St. Francis	Ray Churak	612/434-0471

What Makes Educators Effective Facilitators of Inclusion?

With equity and the right to education clearly articulated in law, why is it that the value and practice of inclusion has not been fully instituted in our public schools? At least part of the answer stems from the reality that social justice and equity have not been realized in our society at large. Our schools reflect what exists in our communities. This is, in part, the reason why some are so passionate and hopeful about the inclusive schooling movement. What today's children and youth learn in school will directly effect the future they create for themselves, for others around them, and for all of us in this global community. Achieving social justice and equity during the formative years in our public schools could facilitate the creation of communities that are more equitable, just, and inclusive in our society.

A Description of Inclusion

Inclusive schooling extends far beyond mere physical proximity to creating a sense of belonging and accomplishment for students and adults in classroom and school communities. Inclusion is both a process for and outcome of understanding, acceptance, and valuing of differences among today's school children and youth. Clearly evident in the process of creating inclusive classrooms and schools has been the presence and commitment of highly impassioned people. Surprisingly, much of the literature about educational change has focused on the process, structure, and activities of change with less attention to the people involved.

In an effort to learn more about the people involved in the change process toward inclusive schooling, fifteen individuals considered highly effective in promoting inclusive classroom communities in the St. Cloud Community Schools (District 742) were interviewed as part of a study in 1993. Two sets of parents of students with disabilities, three administrators with district-wide responsibility, two building principals, five general educators, and three special educators/inclusion facilitators were included in the interviews.

The primary research question was, "What are the people in inclusive schools about?" Implicit in this question is an attempt to understand *why* people do what they do. What are the underlying values that drive their actions and daily practice in schools? How do they view children? How do they view their roles as educators? Why do they choose to teach? How do their personal and professional values and actions effect the climate, learning, and focus in their classrooms? The findings of this study addressed both the *process* of inclusion in the district and the *people* who were involved in the inclusion initiative.

The Process of Inclusion

Three themes emerged related to the process of inclusion regarding students with moderate to severe disabilities. First, there were precipitating events that included a parent's request to have her child included in general education; a decision by key players to learn about inclusion which was followed by a commitment to facilitate the creation of a more inclusive education for students with disabilities; and strategic planning involving key people and targeting new schools for which planning was underway.

Second, there was a history of positive working relationships. One set of important relationships was between special education administrators and coordinators and general education administrators and principals. Another set was between the special education coordinator and the special education teachers. Their relationships and commitment to students was an important capacity for movement forward. Through the inclusion process, these special education teachers shifted from working in the self-contained program to working as facilitators of inclusion.

Third, several additional elements emerged as having a positive influence on the change process: (1) an explicit focus on sharing local (i.e., district) success stories; (2) strong, positive beliefs about the people involved and the central role that people would play in the process; and (3) the superintendent's decentralized approach to education.

People Involved in Inclusion

The *people of inclusion* themes that emerged were easily identified and remarkably consistent across interviews. Common *people* themes expressed included: (1) students were valued as unique individuals with capacities and worth; (2) classrooms were viewed as communities with explicit attention to establishing relationships and positive interdependence among classmates; (3) none of the adults involved in the change felt alone – everyone interviewed indicated feeling supported, respected, and valued in their efforts; (4) interviewees held positive beliefs about people and the power of individual and collective effort; (5) teachers had a sense of self-efficacy and worth – they were clear about their positive contributions to the learning and growth of children; and (6) the educators viewed themselves as agents of educational and social change on a daily basis in their classrooms.

In keeping with the concept that people are central to change and in one another's lives, interviewees were asked if there were people in their lives who were of particular significance. All identified either a teacher or an adult family member. Most identified teachers who affected them early in life and who influenced, if not in-

spired, their decisions to become teachers.

Special educators indicated that the most important aspects of the movement toward inclusive schooling were knowing students and their families individually and valuing both special *and* general education colleagues. They said it is also important to reflect on how what they do makes a difference in students' lives. General educators cited the importance of seeing students with disabilities as whole children with many needs common to all children while still recognizing "special" needs, of valuing inclusion, and of focusing on affective outcomes for all students. General educators in this study also said they feel strongly supported by special educators.

Conclusion

The findings of this study align with current research on educational reform that emphasizes the central role of people in the change process, the need to look beyond the structure of reform to the underlying value base of the initiative, and a view of effective teaching that extends beyond competencies and behaviors to personal characteristics and attributes. Some might well look upon these findings with a degree of skepticism given the small number of individuals involved and the selection of participants who had been highly effective and influential in the inclusion initiative. To be sure, they represent a highly positive reality. Others might look upon these findings with great appreciation for the efforts of educators and hope for the children in today's schools and for our communities of tomorrow. As stated by Rosenholtz (1985):

> Of the many resources required by schools, the most vital are the contributions – of effort, commitment, and involvement – of teachers. (p. 355)

We believe there is reason to be hopeful about the potential of inclusive schooling as both a process and outcome for achieving equity and social reform in our schools and in society at large.

Contributed by Jennifer York, Mary Beth Doyle, and Robi Kronberg, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota.

Rosenholtz, S. (1985). Effective Schools: Interpreting the Evidence. *American Journal of Education, 93*, 352–388.

Programming for All Learners

For the past three years Maple Lake High School (a member of MAWSECO, Meeker and Wright Special Education Cooperative) has used one resource area as a shared base for students receiving assistance from Assurance of Mastery or special education. Learners may go to the resource area for assistance during general education class time. The student's eligibility label is not the focus; the focus is clearly on providing assistance. Support is provided by Assurance of Mastery or special education staff. Learners throughout the building see the resource area as an open setting where questions can be answered. The resource area is socially accepted by learners throughout the building.

The Maple Lake Elementary School Special Services is developing one resource area also, following the high school service model. Services, for the most part, are provided within the general education classroom, but teachers and paraprofessionals also share space and materials in the resource area as needed. Paraprofessionals work with learners regardless of program "label", the time used to assist students is documented, and funding matches student service time.

In preparation for the changes at the Maple Lake Elementary School, general education teachers, Chapter 1 staff, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals worked three days in August on planning and team building. The district MEEP team supported this effort. The three days of workshops were planned in response to changes in the way services will be provided to learners in an elementary building. Learners will be served by a general educator along with Chapter 1, special education, and a paraprofessional. The certified staff worked together to develop and carry out two days of training for paraprofessionals, followed by one day of team planning for the certified staff to prepare for the upcoming year. The focus of the training days was team building and curriculum content modification.

An outcome of the August planning time has been the creation of a weekly planning time for the three staff; General, Chapter, and Special educators meet together for thirty minutes each week for continued curriculum modification and problem solving. Maple Lake School district has provided a substitute for one day each week to rove from class to class allowing the general teacher to join the weekly meeting. Further questions about this effective plan for support and inclusion can be answered by Barb Lhotka, Child Study Coordinator, MAWSECO, at 612/286-2129.

Why Educators Support Self-Determination for Students with Disabilities

Teachers want their students to grow into adults who can take care of themselves. We want students to be able to make good decisions and, as much as possible, be in charge of their own lives. The ability to have control over one's life and make one's own decisions is called *self-determination.* Developing the skills and attitudes necessary for self-determination is important for *all* students. Unfortunately, it is often overlooked for students with disabilities because some adults believe that these students cannot make good choices and are not able to direct their own lives.

In recent years, educators have found that students with mental retardation, emotional/behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, and learning disabilities – at all levels of severity – do have the capacity to exercise control over their lives (e.g. Abery, et. al., in press; Wehmeyer, in press; Martin & Huber Marshall, in press). To develop that capacity, they may need specific instruction in self-determination skills, such as choice-making, problem-solving, negotiating, goal-setting, advocating, and assertive communicating. It is the role of educators to create the opportunities for that instruction to take place because supporting the self-determination of students with disabilities is part of preparing them for adult life. And because, with opportunities to learn and practice, many students with disabilities can share in these benefits of self-determination:

Personal Control

Promoting the self-determination of students with disabilities has the potential to increase their belief that events are under their personal control and that they are competent individuals. When students have an increased sense of control and competence, they show improved focus, task persistence, motivation, and subsequent educational outcomes.

Motivation

When students with disabilities have opportunities to set personal goals and make choices, they become partners in the learning process. This increases their motivation, directly enhancing the quality of learning within the classroom. Motivated students are likely to increase their participation in academic activities. In addition, difficult to reach students may become motivated to get involved when given opportunities to experience some control over their education.

Prosocial Behaviors

Inappropriate classroom behaviors often represent students' most effective means of exercising control over their environments. By teaching students to take charge of their lives and providing them daily opportunities to practice choice-making, self-control, and personal advocacy skills, educators promote the development and use of prosocial means through which to exercise control within the school and community.

Self-Awareness

Students can only truly be aware of their capacities and limits through the experience of trying, succeeding or failing, and learning. Students with disabilities are often not given the opportunity to experience this process. Through first-hand discovery of their own capacities, students can understand, adjust to, and accept the challenges imposed by their disability and can better know and build on their talents and strengths.

Participation

Self-determination skills directly enhance the capacity of students with disabilities to eventually live independently or semi-independently in the community, to maintain employment, and to develop circles of friends. When students are encouraged to take charge of their lives, they are also encouraged to live as fully-included members of society.

Responsibility

When students with disabilities exercise personal control over their lives, they learn to take responsibility for their actions. The best way to teach students about responsibility is to present them with opportunities to make choices and then allow them to experience the outcomes of their choices.

Independence and Interdependence

Students who are not given choices learn to be dependent on others. Students who are taught to make their own choices and encouraged to "take charge", learn to make mature, informed decisions. They also learn to receive, as well as give, support to others, becoming an integral part of an interdependent community.

A Vision for the Future

Most persons with disabilities are denied the right to dream about their future. Their visions are often determined by others. Enhanced self-determination facilitates students' acquisition of the self-awareness, personal advocacy, problem-solving, and self-regulation skills that are necessary for them to create their own visions.

Self-Esteem

Enhanced self-determination enables students with disabilities to move beyond simply creating a vision for the future to actually realizing the vision, on their own terms. This experience strengthens students' positive sense of self-worth and self-confidence as they discover their ability to set and meet personal goals.

Self-Advocacy

Enhancing the self-determination skills of students with disabilities teaches them to assert their rights, clearly communicate their needs, and become self-advocates. This, in turn, allows them to define their personal visions and advocate for the changes and supports they need to turn their visions into reality.

Awareness of Rights

Promoting self-determination enhances the acceptance and understanding of basic human rights for all individuals, including those with disabilities. This provides support for self-advocacy by students with disabilities, and a much-needed lesson for all persons in society.

Learning to take control of one's life is an ongoing process that involves practice. Students with disabilities learn best when they have opportunities to exercise self-determination skills within their schools, homes, and communities. It is important that we, as educators, collaborate with families and community members to provide those opportunities.

This article is available in a color brochure/poster format. In addition to this version for educators, there is another for families. To obtain copies, send 75 cents per brochure (check or P.O. made payable to the University of Minnesota) along with your request to Publications Office, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 109 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455; Telephone 612/624-4512. This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.

Abery, B., Rudrud, E., Arndt, K., Schauben, L., & Eggebeen, E. (in press). Evaluating a multicomponent program to enhance the self-determination of youth with disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic*.

Martin, J. & Huber Marshall, L. (in press). Choice-maker: A comprehensive self-determination transition program. *Intervention in School and Clinic*.

Wehmeyer, M. (in press). A career education approach to self-determination for youth with mild cognitive disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic*.

Promoting Self-Advocacy in a Classroom Setting

The following are some useful tips for promoting self-advocacy in the classroom:

- **Help** students with disabilities feel welcome in the classroom on the first day of class by inviting them to ask for accommodations.
- **Observe** principles of good instruction. Preview, instruct, review, and leave time for questions.
- **Provide** positive reinforcement. Let students know it's okay to make mistakes, to declare problems, and to problem solve together to find appropriate modifications.
- **Acknowledge** the difficulty. Let students know that some areas of their program will be more difficult than others – that everybody has their ups and downs in the program at different times. Let them know you expect this and that you'll be there to support them.
- **Allow** students to vent their frustrations and let them know there are appropriate ways to do it. Explain the difference between passive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors. Then tell them it's their responsibility to let you know when they're having difficulty so, as a team, you can help students arrive at a solution to the problem.
- **Provide** students with feedback. Help them understand that appropriately asking for help is self-advocating in a way that helps them prepare for life and helps you be more effective in your instruction.
- **Be positive.** Let students know they will improve their skills. The more they ask for and receive appropriate help, the more the will improve.
- **Incorporate** study skill techniques into your daily teaching. For example, demonstrate how to highlight key terms when introducing a new chapter.

Contributed by Betty Aune and Jean Ness.

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The Perfect Pumpkin: A True Story

"I'm home," I called out as I walked through the door one fall evening. Cristin, my five-year-old daughter, came run-ning with open arms. Our nightly ritual of running to each other for hugs and kisses was the highlight of the day.

Nancy had decorated the house with her usual display of leaves, Indian corn, and squash. As I glanced around the kitchen, I couldn't help noticing a very large pumpkin sitting on the counter. The bright orange skin reflected a true feeling of autumn from beneath a crusty, French-bread looking complexion. Oddly shaped on one side, its stem thrust back like an old rusty water pump handle.

"Oh, I see you got a pumpkin," I said as I greeted my wife at the kitchen sink. "Who picked this one out?"

"Shh – your daughter wanted this one," Nancy whispered back, "She insisted on bringing this one home."

Thoughts ran through my mind. How on earth are we going to make a jack-o-lantern out of this rutty looking pumpkin? I picked it up, wondering where it was grown. What had caused such an unusual form? Yet despite its shape, this pumpkin felt strong, firm, and healthy.

"Cristin, did you pick out this big pumpkin?" I asked from across the room. "Yes," came her enthusiastic reply. "What do you want to do with this big pumpkin?" "Make jack-o-lantern!" she said.

I turned the pumpkin over and over in my hands, look-ing for a side I could carve. Why would Cristin select such an unusually shaped pumpkin? It was obvious that she needed more experience picking perfect pumpkins. I placed the old pumpkin back on the counter, thinking we could buy another before Halloween.

Days flew by. The odd pumpkin sat on the counter in its unique stance. I found myself beginning to appreciate its special character. I noticed how one side projected upward, catching the light and your eye. Its stem, per-fectly formed, tilted like a stocking cap.

"Are you going to carve the pumpkin tonight?" Nancy asked. I stared at the pumpkin, suddenly realizing that it was Halloween eve. With no other choice if we were going to have a jack-o-lantern this year, I decided to try.

That evening, with an assortment of tools spread across the dining room table, I began to see this most unusual pumpkin in a whole different light. I found that the odd shape, if turned just right, presented a side that actually looked up to an admirer. As I drew eyes, nose, and a large mouth, I realized how special this pumpkin really was. How lucky we were that Cristin noticed the potential in our new friend.

It took several hours to carve a face that I found in a magazine. When I added the eyebrows and a big smile, I couldn't believe the character the odd shape gave his warm face. I lit the candle and carefully placed it in the center of the table. With the lights lowered, we stood in silence staring at our perfect jack-o-lantern. The quirky smile that rolled across his face uplifted us. The sparkle in his eyes made us laugh and filled our hearts with joy. I began to realize how wrong I was several days ago. I can't tell you exactly why this pumpkin left such an im-pression on me, but I had to search my conscience for the reason why I had quickly decided what could not be rather than focus on the possibilities. How many of us do the same thing to people who seem different?

We often overlook the power in those who are unusual. Yet the differences in people are often the sources of new life, creating a fulfilling environment by providing us with opportunities to mature and grow.

We often overlook the power in those who are unusual. Yet the dif-ferences in people are often the sources of new life, creating a fulfill-ing environment by providing us with opportunities to mature and grow.

Maybe they're with us so that we may gain new knowledge. Maybe they're with us to provide unique opportunities to understand that diversity is life. Without it we'd all be "perfect pumpkins." What a bor-ing world it would be!

Each of us, no matter what our physical or mental distinction, has the power to make a positive difference in this world. Unless we value the differences, we are left only to our own experiences, missing the wisdom of those who experience the world differently.

I decided to make a difference, remembering the les-sons learned from this special jack-o-lantern and the pos-sibilities seem endless. The key is a positive mental atti-tude, a willingness to learn, and the desire to nurture the full potential of those who are different from me. Just think what our world would be like if all of us, like Cristin, extended our hand to all the "special pumpkins" in this world.

Contributed by Chuck Palmer. He lives in Indian Har-bour Beach, Florida with his wife Nancy and daughter Cristin, who is making great strides in reaching her own full potential and freely gives her parents the oppor-tunities to grow and experience much joy in life.

Readers' Forum
Classroom Practices... Concrete Examples

Have you or your team just discovered a fantastic new method, technique, or strategy? *Readers' Forum* is an opportunity for you to share the techniques that are working for you in the following areas: adaptations, strategies involving classmates, activity or project-based lessons, and classroom community building. Submissions can range from the simple to the complex, child-specific to whole classroom applications, trial-and-error or accidentally generated to systematically planned... but all strategies must have proven useful in at least one situation and be potentially useful to others.

Submit your successful strategies for *Readers' Forum* to Laura Medwetz, University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, 111 Pattee Hall, Minneapolis, MN 55455, 612/626-7225. Contributors of printed ideas will receive a "Learning Together" poster.

Adaptations

In order to deliver effective instruction in classrooms with diverse learning needs, teachers will adapt, modify, and adjust instruction to meet the needs of individual students. An important part of the instructional process is the design of an appropriate assessment. Appropriate assessment involves genuine evaluation of each learner's development or acquisition of skills and knowledge. The following modifications were developed for assessment in a science class.

The students just completed a unit on perennial flowers. The unit involved in-class instruction and experience in the local green house. The students were asked to complete an assignment that required illustrations of five perennial flowers. Students were to include in each illustration the name of the flower and labeling of the parts of the flower. Here are some of the assignment modifications that were developed:

- Require seven illustrations.
- Require five illustrations plus written text for each flower, describing its origin and growing zones.
- Require fewer than five illustrations
- Require one illustration and provide pre-labeled cards for the student to place on the illustration.
- Cut up an illustration and require the student to put the pieces back together to make a flower.
- Allow a student to dictate the names of the flowers and labels to another student, teacher, or volunteer who could write in the information provided.
- Provide an illustration and only require naming and labeling of parts.
- Provide pictures of flowers, trees, and bushes and ask the student to identify the pictures of flowers.

Strategies Involving Classmates

Here are some ways that the "buddy system" can be used for test taking:

- Provide a sample test or study guide and allow students to buddy-up when preparing for the test.
- Allow students to take tests with classmates in pairs or small groups.
- Provide students with the opportunity to have a test read by another student (peer or cross age).
- Allow a student to dictate his or her test answers to another student who could write in the answers.

Activities or Project-Based Lessons

Here's a great way for students to work together and demonstrate comprehension. After listening to a story read by the teacher, the class is broken up into small cooperative groups. The groups are asked to illustrate the main points of the story. Group illustrations are designed by the individual groups and can be presented through a variety of mediums: pictures or murals, role play or acting, song or rap, creative structures, etc.

Classroom Community Ideas and Strategies

Opening up the classroom to invite family participation is a great message from the school to the home that *all are welcome*. Here's an idea that broadens the definition of classroom community to include students, teachers, and families.

On the first day of school students attend with their parent(s). If parents are unable to attend, some other special person (i.e., grandmother, neighbor) will join each student that day. The day is broken into four two-hour sessions. Families sign up the previous spring for the session they would like to attend. In the classroom, families receive a welcoming folder that includes fun papers for students to complete and papers for parents to discuss with the teacher and/or fill-out. This first day of school can be a great kick-off for schools.

Resources for Educators and Families

The following materials are published by the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota. To order, send a check or purchase order made payable to the University of Minnesota to the Publications Office, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 109 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455. Telephone: 612/624-4512.

Collaborative Teamwork
This pamphlet describes the process and role of collaborative teamwork in inclusive education; especially useful for educators, related service personnel, parents, and team members. Includes a checklist for evaluating team effectiveness. First copy is free; each additional copy is $.50.

Community Connections
A curriculum consisting of thirty-six 15 to 20 minute lessons to facilitate positive relationships, communication, and a sense of community among students during advisory period or home room in middle school (grades 5–8). $4.00.

Inclusive Education for Learners with Severe Disabilities: Print and Media Resources: 1994–95
Available Winter 1994 · Annual directory of publications, audio/visual media, and organizations dealing with inclusive education. Cost to be determined.

Impact: Feature Issue on Inclusive Education (Preschool–1st Grade)
Summer 1991 · Profiles research, practices, and philosophies in inclusive education; includes success stories from programs and individuals. First copy is free; each additional copy is $2.00.

Impact: Feature Issue on Inclusive Education (Grades K–12)
Fall 1991 · Profiles research, practices, and philosophies in inclusive education; includes success stories from programs and individuals. First copy is free; each additional copy is $2.00.

Impact: Feature Issue on Self-Determination
Winter 1993–94 · Explores the relevance of self-determination for persons with developmental disabilities across the life span. First copy is free; each additional copy is $2.00.

Integrated School Communities: 10 Reasons Why
This brochure lists ten reasons why more and more families and educators support inclusive school communities where students with severe disabilities learn alongside students without labels. First copy is free; each additional copy is $.50.

Integration Checklist: A Guide to Full Inclusion of Students with Disabilities
This brochure is designed to help educational team members identify potential indicators of inclusion in their schools and can also help teams facilitate inclusion in integrated school settings. First copy is free; each additional copy is $.50.

Lessons for Inclusion
1993 · A curriculum designed to assist educators in developing caring classroom communities in which all children are valued members. Includes lessons in four areas: "Including Everyone", "Liking Myself, "Making and Keeping Friends", and "Cooperating with Others". Lessons and poster are available for $10.00; lessons, poster, and nine children's books that accompany the lessons are $50.00.

Making Friends: Using Recreation Activities to Promote Friendship Between Students with and without Disabilities
1993 · This 84-page handbook assists community and recreation staff, teachers, and parents in providing the much-needed support for friendships between children with and without disabilities. $10.00.

Policy Research Brief: Are We Pushing Students in Special Education to Drop Out of School?
April 1994 · A summary of research on policy issues that affect the school drop-out problem among youth with disabilities; examines the government and school policies that affect school holding power and recommends responses. $1.50.

Why Educators Support Self-Determination for Students with Disabilities
1994 · A color brochure/poster that lists the positive outcomes of encouraging self-determination in students with all types of disabilities. $.75 each.

Why Families Support Self-Determination for Children with Disabilities
1994 · A color brochure/poster that lists the positive outcomes of encouraging self-determination in children and youth with all types of disabilities. $.75 each.

Yes I Can Program
1994 · A twenty-lesson curriculum for junior and senior high school students designed to establish peer support for students with developmental disabilities as they overcome barriers to social inclusion. Students with and without disabilities meet weekly to develop social skills, resources, and the ability to establish and maintain social connections. Instructor and student manuals are sold separately and include masters for overheads and handouts. $25.00.

(*Needs – continued from page 3*)

Next Steps

Focus group training was provided in August for the organizations collaborating on this project, including parent organizations, school districts, and state education agencies. These individuals plan to conduct focus groups this fall with parents and staff in their organizations in an attempt to select priorities from the identified needs and then develop collaborative strategies to meet those needs within their organization. In 1995, staff from the Together We're Better program will pull together representatives from the collaborating organizations to share their priorities and action plans and discuss any major needs identified in the survey results that are not being addressed by any organization. This discussion may lead to some joint action plans across collaborating organizations, as well as provide the Minnesota Department of Education with information regarding unmet needs of parents. The development and dissemination of the survey as well as acting upon the results has truly said "together we *are* better"! It is our hope that, because of that collaboration, families will be better supported in advocating for their needs, systems will be better able to meet those needs, and ultimately collective efforts to build more inclusive school communities will be strengthened!

For more information on the survey results or focus group opportunities contact the Institute on Community Integration at 111 Pattee, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455; 612/624-1349. Copies of the full report or summary can be ordered from the Publications Office, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 109 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455; 612/624-4512.

The survey was produced by the Together We're Better Program, a collaborative program between the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Education, in partnership with PACER, Arc Minnesota, the Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, Learning Disabilities of Minnesota, and the Deaf-Blind Technical Assistance Project.

(*Communities – continued from page 5*)

the problem would go away. When a student was killed in an after-school fight, the community was initially shocked and numb. However, the community started to come together shortly after this tragedy to express anger at how such a thing could happen. This anger was channeled in positive ways, much of the leadership coming from the students themselves. Although it was tragic that such an act was the crisis that brought the community together, the hope was that other losses would be prevented and that the community would become a safe, growing place again.

- **New growth and commitment** to the community can occur within conflicts. Through effectively resolving conflict, people can grow individually and in relationships with others. In dealing with conflict, new perspectives and feelings can be discovered. For example, Mia's mom, classroom teacher, and speech clinician all had different ideas on how to best help Mia expand her language comprehension. For the first few weeks they all focused on the "place" of instruction, until the classroom teacher suggested using a more formal problem-solving process to try to reach a solution everyone liked. They went through a series of steps, beginning with clearly identifying Mia's needs. By brainstorming a whole list of possible ways to meet her language needs, it became clear that there were more than three solutions. In the end, a totally new solution was identified and the team felt closer as a result of this shared struggle.

Conclusion

We can think of inclusive communities as being much more than simply "places" to live or go to school. Rather, they are a way of life and of being together that includes a variety of factors. Belonging appears to be an essential part of any discussion on creating caring, inclusive communities. Being in community with others and experiencing belonging is the base from which a person can grow and thrive in a community and getting conflict out in the open and working together for solutions appears to be important in healthy communities.

The excitement and hope in this discussion are about learning. There are many beliefs to be developed and skills to be learned to help us get along effectively in diverse communities. Adults and children who are members of communities can both learn and teach others to be more responsive and inclusive, as well as work together as a community to understand and use healthy ways to address conflict. There is much to learn and much to do!

Contributed by Jo Montie and Terri Vandercook, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. An earlier version of this article was published in the 1993 Project CREATE Teaching Guide. For information about Project CREATE's work, contact Cathy Macdonald at 612/490-0058, ext. 110.

Berman, S. (1990). Educating for Social Responsibility. *Educational Leadership, 48,* (3), pp. 75-80.

What's Happening

- *November 9–10, 1994* Coming Together for Children and Families. Sponsored by the Regional Interagency Systems Change Initiative. Bloomington, MN. Contact Pam Hunt, 612/625-3863.
- *November 10–12, 1994* Multiple Voices, Multiple Perspectives. Sponsored by the Council for Exceptional Children in collaboration with the Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners. San Diego, CA. Contact 800/224-6830.
- *December 8–10, 1994* Annual TASH Conference. Atlanta, GA. Contact 800/482-TASH.
- *February 23–25, 1995* The Inclusion Strategies Conference. Sponsored by the Coalition for Inclusive Education. Denver, CO. Contact 719/531-9400.
- *February 27–28, 1995* Facilitated Communication and Inclusive Education: Planning Transitions. Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY. Contact 315/443-9657.
- *March 25–28, 1995* The Mind's Wealth: the Promise of a Golden Harvest. Sponsored by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). San Francisco, CA. Contact 703/549-9657.
- *April 27–29, 1995* National Paraprofessional Conference. St. Paul, MN. Contact 212/642-2948.
- *May 8–9, 1995* Fourth Conference: Making the Point – New Developments in Facilitated Communication. Preconference held May 7, 1995. Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY. Contact 315/443-9657.

What's Working:
Topics in Inclusive Education
Fall 1994

Readers are invited to submit articles on inclusive education strategies, resources, and practices to *What's Working*. Contact Laura Medwetz, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 111 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455. Telephone: 612/626-7225. This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.

What's Working is published annually by Together We're Better, a cooperative program of the Institute on Community Integration (a University Affiliated Program), College of Education, University of Minnesota, and the Minnesota Department of Education. It is supported in part by grant number H086J20010 from the U.S. Department of Education. The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Together We're Better, the Institute on Community Integration, Minnesota Department of Education, or their funding sources.

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